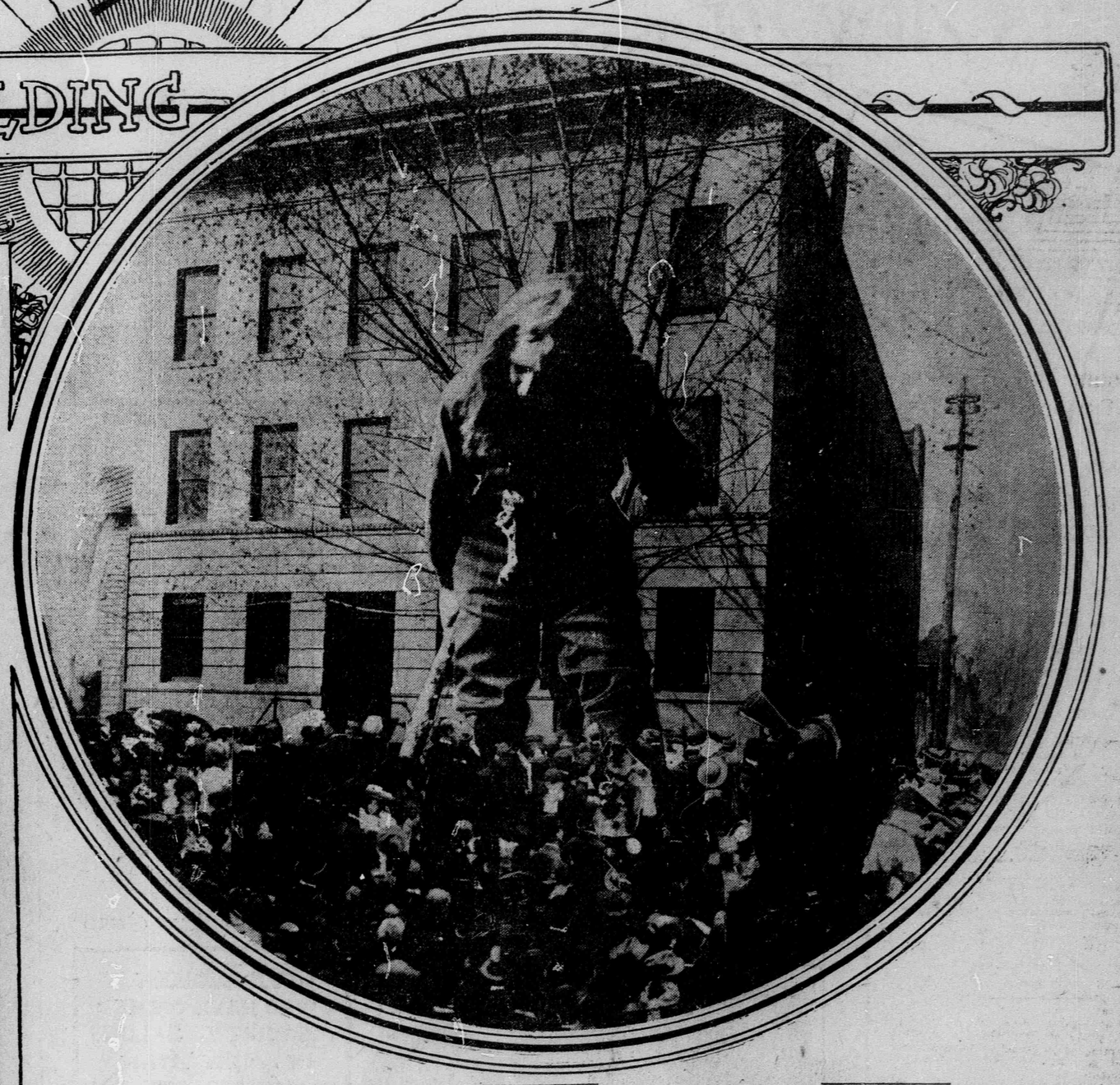
THE ESCAPED GIANT'S ADVENTURES IN WASHINGTON

AT THE DISTRICT BUILDING



Hears That Every Time a Washingtonian Does Not Sleep Well He Runs to the Commissioners With His Complaint.

URNOG GRIMDUNALB, the wayfarer from the land of Brobdingnag, yawned. The sound as he brought his teeth together with a snap after the yawn was as if an iron girder had fallen from a building to a stone paved street.

Plaintly the giant was bored. For four days he had remained in his room eating his enormous meals and smoking the huge cigars which were made especially for him by order of The Times. He had not gone abroad because of the excitement attendant upon his little excursions and the difficulty he found in moving through the vast crowds without hurting some of the spectators. But even such a good-natured giant cannot be expected to stay housed up all the time, and the confinement had begun to tell upon his nerves and temper.

"You manikins make me tired," he remarked to the reporter who was with him. "I never saw anything more amusing and at the same time pitiful than to see those little mites in Congress squabbling among themselves as if they were something more than mere specks on the face of the earth. And at the White House it was the same thing—all anxious to make themselves conspicuous by their presence there, and all acting the part of the puppets as if they amounted to something, when I could have reached down and cleaned the entire house of them all with a few sweeps of my hands. To me it all seems so petty and so absurd that if I had not seen it I would never have believed that such conditions existed. By the by, how do you govern Washington?"

The system of having three Commissioners was explained to him.

It Becomes Necessary.

"Why three?" asked Urnog.

"Oh, so they can divide up the work of making speeches at banquets of citizens' associations and similar bodies," said the reporter.

"Well, let's go down and take a peep at these Commissioners and see what they are doing. Are we likely to find them in?"

"Sure," said the reporter, "you will find them in their offices unable to escape from delegations of reformers of one sort or another who want them to spend money they haven't got or to do something else utterly beyond their powers."

"How's that?" asked Urnog.

"Oh, every time a Washingtonian has a fit of indigestion or does not sleep well at night he or she runs to the Commissioners with a tale of woe and tries to persuade them to close up the saloons or build a new bridge or tear down somebody's house or something of that sort."

"Well, well," sighed Urnog sympathetically, "they must be about as happy as the keeper of a speak-easy in a Kansas town when a temperance wave is on hand. We will go down and see what are the principal troubles of the midgets who try to get the Commissioners to reorganize the universe."

With that Urnog placed the reporter on his shoulder and sallied forth into the street to make his way to the District Building. While strolling along he became communicative.

Nothing Wrong With Poker.

"That's a great game you rang in on me the other night," he said.

"Poker is the only thing in the business," conceded the reporter.

"I'd like to see Uncle Joe play a hand," said Urnog. "I am willing to bet my last cent he would shove up his whole stack of blues and bluff everybody to the woods on a pair of chambermaids. He may four-flush occasionally, but its an odds-on proposition that he's there with the goods when it comes to a show down."

Arrived at the District building and finding the elevators too small for comfort, Urnog climbed nimbly four flights of stairs, and was introduced first of all to the District press room.

"This is where the words and deeds of the Commissioners are recorded for the benefit of mankind and future generations," he was told.

"Are these, then, the Commissioners?" he asked.

The feeling of resentment was manifest and he apologized immediately. "Do you write everything that's printed about the Commissioners, then?"

"Everything they don't write themselves."

"Are they so handy with the typewriter?"

"Very. Two of them used to be scribes like us," was the reply in chorus.

"Say not so! 'And it has come to this!' How sad! As Willie Shakespeare once said, 'What a falling off——'"

"Shut up, Urnog," cried his escort. "You promised to cut out that sort of thing, you know."

A Mistaken Identity.

But the giant was leaning eagerly forward and gazing through the open doorway into the hall. "So that's one of them, is it? A real, live Commissioner! How different from those ordinary Congressmen you pointed out to me. How haughty, how oblivious he is to all of common clay. What dignity, what poise——"

"What are you looking at, Urnog," said the reporter, disgustedly. "The Commissioners aren't a bit like that. Why, that fellow down the hall is only the clerk who handles the red tape and files letters."

"Then where are these famous men of yours?" asked Urnog, impatiently.

"They've assembled in the board room to welcome you. Come along, now, and please don't make any breaks."

The big fellow good-naturedly promised, lifted one reporter to a shoulder, stuck another one in each pocket, squeezed through the doorway and presented himself before the triumvirate. "In the name of the press," he cried.

Barricated, as it were, behind the long oak desks sat the Commissioners three not quite sure of the proper etiquette to observe for such an unusual visitor.

"It gives me profound pleasure, on behalf of my colleagues and myself, to extend to you a most hearty welcome," was Commissioner Macfarland's greeting.

Intimate Relations.

"Come up closer, my dear fellow," replied the giant, "I really can't hear you down there," and, suiting the action to the word he picked the President of the Board from the far side of the table with perfect ease and deposited him carefully on his vacant shoulder. Seating himself on the table he lifted Colonel Biddle to one knee and Commissioner West to the other.

"Now, let's have a little heart-to-heart talk," he suggested.

"Let me see, you three are the big men of the District, aren't you?"

They confessed it.

"But who's boss? What happens when you don't agree on something?"

Mr. Macfarland hastened to assure him that they always agreed.

"Always," echoed Colonel Biddle.

"Most always," added Mr. West, thinking of the smoke law.

"How nice! Who has the last word?"

"Everybody. There's no limit."

"What a jolly game," said the giant. "You've a lovely city to govern, too, haven't you? Fine sort of people, aren't they? Never kick on anything you do, I suppose?"

"They never do anything else." It was the Engineer Commissioner who spoke, flicking the ashes off his cigar and looking out the window toward northeast Washington.

"What a shame! And yet how true!

"'Blow, blow, thou winter wind,
Thou art not so unkind
As man's ingratitude.'"

"We Are Not Elected."

"You see," said Colonel Biddle, "they don't understand."

"Misunderstood, eh? 'Tis ever the penalty of greatness. 'Be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny.'"

"Do you think they'll re-elect you when your terms are out?" continued Urnog.

The Commissioners looked hurt. "We are not elected, sir, we are selected. The President does it, not the people," explained the President of the Board.

"You don't say so! Here I was blaming the people all the time and it isn't their fault at all. Why didn't you tip me off?" pulling The Times reporter up short in a fit of suppressed laughter in Urnog's collar.

"That's what I call the heavy end of the log, that is," added Urnog.

The Commissioners were trying to dissect this statement when a young man grown old with trouble passed the door.

"Who's that?" asked Urnog.

"That's Mr. Stidham, the Superintendent of Street Cleaning," replied Mr. West.

"On a vacation, isn't he? Isn't working at it, is he?"

"Oh, yes; his is the busiest office in the building—now," Mr. West assured him.

"Then why doesn't he get the ice off the crossings and the snow out of the gutters?" queried Urnog. "I knocked down a mail box in front of The Times office because I slipped on the ice and grabbed at it in falling."

"The truth is," explained Commissioner West, "we are doing the best we can——"

"Don't say it," cried Urnog. "Somebody might hear you. Let 'em think you could do better if you would, don't you see?"

The Reporters Would.

"You see, Mr. —— Mr. Grimdunalb," hesitated Mr. Macfarland from his perch, "Congress won't appropriatee any money to clean the streets and we have to look to Congress for all the money we spend, you know."

"Then you're up against it, sure. I was up there at the Capitol two weeks ago and from what I saw it looks like you'd always get cards off the bottom of the deck."

"I don't understand you," said Mr. Macfarland.

"Never mind, the reporters do."

"You see," said one Commissioner, "we're worried about the inauguration."

"Yes, but if the ice stays," said Urnog, "everything will go off smoothly. That's a joke, you know."

While his hearers were recovering Urnog fell to musing, suddenly breaking the silence with a question directed to Commissioner Macfarland:

"Say, does a flush beat a straight or a straight beat a flush?"

The Commissioner really didn't know and he found his seat on the giant's shoulder very uncomfortable indeed, when a reporter saved the embarrassing situation by whispering in Urnog's ear:

"That isn't his department. Ask one of the others."

"Doesn't one of them know anything about the others' departments?" asked Urnog.

A Matter of Ethics.

"Not a thing. It isn't considered polite for Commissioner West to talk about the Health Office and Commissioner Macfarland wouldn't say a word about the Police Department for anything."

"Somebody's smoking one of your cigars over there," said a reporter with evil intent. He pointed to a big chimney in the distance belching forth dense, black smoke.

"That ought to be stopped," said Urnog.

"You see," said Mr. West, "we haven't an efficient smoke law in the District and such violations will exist until we get a law that can be enforced."

"Pardon me," said Commissioner Macfarland, "the criticism is unfounded. I insist that the present law is eminently satisfactory and should not be amended."

"It's a good law as laws go," put in the colonel.

"I tell you, it's bad——"

"Hush, boys, somebody's coming. After all, you know, there's nothing either good or bad but thinking makes it so."

A delegation of citizens filed into the room. The giant deposited the Commissioners in their chairs and was informed that a hearing was about to commence.

"What's a hearing?" he asked.

The Debating Society.

"A debating society," explained a reporter. "You see it's this way. Suppose there's a new bill introduced in Congress putting a tax on canary birds as pets. The citizens wait until they find out whether the Commissioners are going to support the bill or oppose it and then some citizens' association decides to take the opposite view. Then they challenge the Commissioners to debate. The challenge is accepted and the trouble begins.

"The citizens discuss the various species of canary birds, their breeding, their most musical notes and the best canary seed to use. When the time's expired and the air's full of feathers, the Commissioners thank the citizens for their courtesy and the Commissioners announce they will take the matter under consideration. Then a few days later the Commissioners inform the public that they adhere to their first opinion and believe canaries ought to be taxed."

"Don't they ever change their minds?"

Now for Headquarters.

"They did once—on the builders' bill. But it's very seldom—you see, the citizens' associations don't expect them to."

"Shall we stay to listen?" asked Urnog.

"No, let us escape while we may. Major Sylvester is waiting to see you and he is a very impatient man."

Urnog picked up his six-foot swagger stick, and with one last look departed.

As the Giant and his guide emerged from the District building and turned to their left, they met Major Sylvester coming out of Police Headquarters.

"Major Sylvester, allow me to present to you Mr. Urnog Grimdunalb, the escaped Giant from Brobdingnag, who has been in our midst the past three weeks viewing the sights of the Capital," said the reporter.

"Charmed to meet you, Mr. —— What did you say his name was?"

"Never mind the name, Maje, old boy," said Urnog, good-naturedly. "I am not particular about titles. Call me Egg-nog or any old name you want to. But talking about names, are you the Major Richard Sylvester who is featured as an associate member of the executive committee of the Fish and Game Protective Association?"

"Yes, sir."

"Not the same Major Sylvester who is president of the International Police Chiefs' Association and also president of the National Bureau of Criminal Identification?"

"The same, sir."

A Mutual Friend.

"My dear boy, let me have your hand. I am delighted. I am more than that. Well, well. To think that I should run across a man that I have so often heard of in Brobdingnag. Why, Maje, my first friend in the pigmy class was an old side partner of yours, according to his story. He was always talking about you and how much he admired you."

"May I ask his name?"

"Certainly. He was a sort of plenipotentiary and envoy extraordinary of your people. A fearless chap of ebon hue, a consummate diplomat and exceedingly well liked. His title is the Most Exalted and Honored Thane Dorsey Foulte. He has been in our midst about six years, and has endeared himself in the hearts of all my countrymen because of his attractive personality. Have you ever heard from Dorsey? He said something about writing or wiring you."

"No, sir!" said Major Sylvester, coldly. "I have had no communication from the person you mention. He left here suddenly and I have seen and heard nothing from him."

"Ah," said Urnog. "Something as Little Willie hath it: 'When I burned in desire to question him further, he made himself air into which he vanished.'"

At this point the Giant's attention was attracted by the approach of Commissioner West, who was evidently bent on further conversation. He advanced and examined the Brobdingnagian at close range.

"My friend Mac and myself have had an argument about your club, old chap," said Mr. West. "I have bet him a tenner that I can climb that flagpole you are carrying."

His Suspicions Aroused.

"Do be careful, Harry," cautioned Major Sylvester, "that may be the 'big stick,' you know. Something tells me I have a clue."

The delay in front of Police Headquarters had attracted an enormous crowd. They gathered about the Giant and his welcomers until all the street was filled. Apparently many of the number had never seen the Brobdingnagian at such short range before. The Major retired into the building murmuring something about clearing the streets. In a few minutes there was a split in the crowd, and Chief Belt and Fire Marshall Bieber made their appearance. The former carried his speaking trumpet, and raising it he addressed the big man:

"Hello, up there!" he called. "You and your friends will have to move on. I am going to turn some fire engines on the streets and see if I can wash the ice away."

"All right, little one," said Urnog pleasantly. "I was just going inside to have my measurements taken for the Maje's Bertillon system. He thinks he has me spotted. Be good."

(The Giant's performance of some modern Labors of Hercules will be told next Sunday.)

Commissioner Macfarland Makes a Little Speech of Welcome and Has Heart-to-Heart Talk With the Brobdingnagian.

THE HATS CAME OFF.

The matinee girl tells this one in the Dramatic Mirror:

"A traveling friend, with a sense of humor and methodical habits which permits her to write letters even on one-night stands, tells me of her acquaintance with a 'Southern character.'

"He is the manager of the Hagerstown (Md.) Opera House and is too modest to have his name on the program. Everybody calls him 'colonel.' Robert Mantell had occasion to compliment the colonel while he was playing 'Richelieu' in his house.

"'Your audience is of exceptionally fine appearance, colonel,' he observed.

"'Yes,' returned the colonel. 'They are the best in town.'

"It was what the papers delight to tell 'a representative audience.' The Mrs. Astor, of Hagerstown was there with her court. Society was out in its most sumptuous evening dress. Women were elaborately gowned and exquisitely coiffed, and there was not the tiniest semblance of a hat in the house. Every chapeau was in the dressing room or had been left at home.

"Noting this, Robert Mantell said: 'The ladies of your city are more considerate for others in the audience than in most places. How have you overcome the theater hat habit?'

"'Notice the program?' asked the manager.

"'No.'

"The colonel drew a big pink folder from his pocket. He pointed to a legend in big type immediately below the cast:

"'All ladies over forty years of age will keep their hats on.'

"The colonel looked at the star with solemn eyes.

"'There isn't a woman in Hagerstown over forty years old.'"